

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS AT 70

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WITH YUJA WANG

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Tuesday, March 24, 2015, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles



Acclaimed conductor Michael Tilson Thomas returns to his hometown of Los Angeles for an unforgettable evening featuring the music of George Gershwin alongside Thomas's original compositions. Powerhouse pianist Yuja Wang will add sparks to an already electric concert.

ROSS SCIMECA of the USC Libraries has selected the following resources to help you learn more about the featured artists and the evening's musical program.

About the Artists

Michael Tilson Thomas attended the University of Southern California, studying piano with John Crown and composition and conducting under Ingolf Dahl. From 1968 to 1994, he was the music director of the Ojai Music Festival seven different times. After winning the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood in 1969, Tilson Thomas was named assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That same year, he made his conducting debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, replacing an ill William Steinberg. Tilson Thomas was music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra from 1971 to 1979. Between 1971 and 1977, he also conducted the series of Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic. From 1981 to 1985, he was principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 1987, Tilson Thomas founded the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida, an orchestral academy for gifted young musicians whose stated mission is "to prepare highly gifted graduates of distinguished music programs for leadership roles in orchestras and ensembles around the world." From 1988 to 1995, Tilson Thomas was principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. Today is the 20th reunion of Tilson Thomas with this famous orchestra. Since 1995, Michael Tilson Thomas has served as music director of the San Francisco Symphony. He has recorded extensively for Sony Classical, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA and EMI.

Yuja Wang is a talented Chinese classical pianist. She was born in Beijing, began studying piano there at age six and went on to study at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. By the age of 21, she was already an internationally recognized concert pianist, giving recitals around the world. She has a recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon.

About the Program

This will undoubtedly be an outstanding concert. On the program you will hear Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* from his opera *Peter Grimes*, Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F and Sibelius's Symphony No. 2. Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* brilliantly reflects the changing atmosphere of the opera about an outcast in a ridged fishing village of rural England's east coast. Ever since Debussy's *La Mer*, there has never been an orchestral depiction of the sea as beautiful as what Britten had composed for *Peter Grimes*.

Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F infuses blues and jazz idioms into the classically structured three movement piano concerto. It's truly American in sound and masterly balanced between orchestra and soloist.

Sibelius composed seven great symphonies. In my opinion, the second is the greatest. From the opening pastoral first movement to the strident final movement, the absolute beauty and musical progression of the score is evident to anyone seriously listening to it. This is one of the finest examples of the "Nordic sound" tempered by late Romanticism.

I would highly recommend listening to Britten's own recording of the *Four Sea Interludes*. It is available on CD, but if you cannot find it, listen to any of the five that are currently available in the Music Library. With regard to the Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F, Michael Tilson Thomas recorded a version with Gershwin's own piano roll performance as soloist. It is unfortunately no longer available. However, there are a number of other recordings available in the Music Library. There have been over 100 recordings of Sibelius's Symphony No. 2. The Music Library has two outstanding performances on CD: Karajan on EMI and Colin David on Philips.

Further Investigations

Michael Tilson Thomas, Viva Voce: Conversations with Edward Seckerson (1994)

By Michael Tilson Thomas

Music Library: ML422.T45 T45 1994

Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension (2006)

By Graham Elliott

Music Library: ML410.B853 E45 2006

George Gershwin (1998)

By Rodney Greenberg

Music Library: ML410.G288 G74 1998

Jean Sibelius and His World (2011)

By Daniel M. Grimley

Music Library: ML410.S54 S493 2011